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from his friend
John James Piatt
North Bend, Ohio
April 12, 1909.

THE WITCH IN THE GLASS

ETC.

Sarah P. Piatt

THE WITCH IN THE GLASS

ETC.

BY

SARAH M. B. PIATT

AUTHOR OF "A VOYAGE TO THE FORTUNATE ISLES, ETC.," "CHILD'S-WORLD BALLADS," ETC.

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THE WITCH IN THE GLASS.

"My mother says I must not pass
Too near that glass;
She is afraid that I will see
A little witch that looks like me,
With a red, red mouth to whisper low
The very thing I should not know!"

"Alack for all your mother's care!
A bird of the air,
A wistful wind, or (I suppose
Sent by some hapless boy) a rose,
With breath too sweet, will whisper low
The very thing you should not know!"

MY NEIGHBOUR'S RING.

I NEVER envied his fair, fruitful lands,
His stately house, his slaves, nor anything,
In the old days, for on his too-white hands
I saw and knew the ring.

To-night there is strange news abroad, I 'm told.
—The ring, the ring! It is the same, ah me!
That to their lord the fishermen of old
Brought back from the deep sea! [1]

THE ANSWER OF THE GARDENER.

He leant, at sunset, on his spade.
(Oh, but the child was sweet to see,
The one who in the orchard played!)
He called: "I've planted you a tree!"

The boy looked at it for a while,
Then at the radiant woods below;
And said, with wonder in his smile—
"Why don't you put the leaves on, though?"

The gardener, with a reverent air,
Lifted his eyes, took off his hat—
"The Other Man, the One up there,"
He answered, "He must see to that."

TWO HUNTERS.

[ANECDOTE OF VICTOR EMMANUEL, KING OF ITALY.]

THEY met in the heat of a Southern sun.
And how did they look? Oh, I fancy one
Was a picturesque peasant, such as you may
See in a lover's part, at the play.

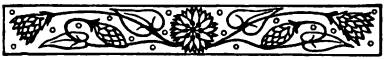
This hunter was nothing at all, you see,
And the other was—everything! But he
Was none too handsome, let us suppose,
Although his face out-reddened the rose.

These two Italians met, as I said,
In a lonesome place where a hare lay dead.
"It is mine—I shot it," one stormily cried;
"It is mine—I shot it," the other replied.

So the beautiful youth went home that night
With his black eyes blacker yet from the fight.
"Now," the genial gentleman said, "it is mine—
And" (this to himself) "by the right divine."

At morning a carriage was sent to bring
The wondering peasant before the king.
"Do you know me, sir?" "I'd the honour to fight
With your Majesty, as I fear, last night."

"And I saw by the shot, when the hare was dressed,
That it was not mine—forgive me the rest:
There's enough for us both—and it was not mine;
Come in, I beg you, with me, and dine."



THE SERMON OF A STATUE.

[IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.]

SUDDENLY, in the melancholy place
With sculptured king and priest and knight assembled,
The music called us. Then, with kindly grace,
On a gold head was laid a hand that trembled:
"You little stranger, come," the verger cried,
"And hear the sermon." "No," the child replied;—

A moment standing on his New-World will,
There in the Corner of the Poets, holding
His cap with pretty reverence, as still
As any of that company, he said, folding
His arms: "But let that canon wait." And then:
"I want to stay here with these marble men;—

"If they could preach, I 'd listen!" Ah, they can,
Another thought. It pleased the boy to linger
In the pale presence of the peerless man
Who pointed to his text with moveless finger.

Laughing with blue-eyed wonder, he said: "Look,
This one (but do you know him?) has a book!"

. . . I know him. Ay, and all the world knows him,—
  Among the many poets the one only!
On that high head the stainéd gloom was dim;
  In those fixed eyes the look of gods was lonely.
Kings at his feet, to whom his hand gave fame,
Lay, dust and ashes, shining through his name.

I heard him. With the still voice of the dead
  From that stone page, right careless of derision,
Sad jesters of a faithless age! he read
  How the great globe would vanish like a vision,
With all that it inhabit. . . . And hath he
Then writ but one word, and that—Vanity?

AFTER HER FIRST PARTY.

"It was just lovely, and, mamma, my dress
Was much the prettiest there, the boys all said:
They said too that I looked—my best. I guess
These ribbons suited me. You see, that red,
You did not fancy, lighted up so well.
Somebody told me I was quite a belle.

"I wish you didn't want me to wear white,
With just a flower or two. Rose wears such things.
They 're so old-fashioned. She was such a fright!
I wish that I had fifty diamond rings,—
I'd wear them all at once! I'd almost paint,
Before I'd look like Rose. She 's such a saint."

"I thought you were the best of friends." "We are,—
Only we hate each other! That is what
The best of friends do—in our school. How far
Away you look! Forgive me. I forgot.

I've made you sad. *I'll* love the whole world too,
I guess, mamma—when I'm as old as you!

"Why don't you listen, mamma? You must be
Thinking of Adam. Here's a bud he gave
You once in Eden—shut up here, you see,
In this old book!" "That grew upon a grave."
"Oh, I'll not touch it, then. I wish that pearls
Would grow on trees—but not for other girls.

"Now, mamma, please to hear me to the end.
The handsomest of all the boys last night
Looked like that picture of—your brother's friend.
He hardly spoke to Rose. (Oh, I'm not quite
An angel yet. I shall be, I suppose,
Sometime.) I'm glad he hardly spoke to Rose.

"I wonder, mamma, did you ever go
To a first party. And what did you wear?
——How odd you must have looked! But tell me, though,
About your dress. How many girls were there?"
"Fifty, perhaps." "There were some boys, I'd guess?"
"Yes, there was one"——"And he was handsome?"
"Yes."

"Where is he now, do you think?" "I do not know.
(In some sweet foreign country, it may be,
Among the palms.") "He might have written, though,
In all these years." "He cannot write." "I see.
What a strange party! Fifty girls—oh dear!
And one boy—and he couldn't write? How queer!"

THE CHILD MOZART AND ST. JOHN OF BOHEMIA.

THE two stood in a faëry place
On some Bohemian hill.
The boy seemed not of our own race,
He was so slight and still;

A lovely alien, who had strayed
When some strange star went by,
Out of its shining ways, and stayed
On earth, he knew not why.

Bare-headed, on that lonesome height,
Where yet the dew was cold,
He took, as by some gracious right,
The sun's salute of gold;

With lambs, above the world of men,
  There in the world of birds,
So looked the young Apollo, when
  He—quite forgot the herds.

Perhaps it was the winds and bees,
  Perhaps his sweet ears rung
With snatches of the melodies
  The morning stars had sung.

Yet this fair little foreign guest,
  Born somewhere in the sky,
Knew—(if the truth must be confest)
  The boy knew how to cry.

"Look, sister, look," he sadly said,
  While great tears gathered slow,
"There is no butter on my bread."
  She answered him: "I know.

"We are so poor, and that is why."
  "Well, what do people do
When they are poor?" "Sometimes they cry."
  (Their mother did, she knew.)

"But don't they pray, too, sometimes?" "Yes."
"Then, good St. John, I say
My mother needs a prettier dress;—
Please send one right away."

(St. John, hurled from a parapet
At some wild Emperor's frown:
Five stars brood on the Moldau yet,
Five stars that saw him drown.)

"We want a new piano, too;
Our old one used to play,
But it forgets its music. You
Are kind to all who pray?

"And there 's the butter, too. But see,—
Why, here he is!" And then
Came laughing from behind a tree
The handsomest of men,

Clothed in dark forest-green, his head
High as an oak's need be,
And shadowed by a plume. He said:
"Come, little ones, with me."

And so the children's saint, the blest,
The beautiful St. John,
Walked with them—(rather oddly drest
You think. Of this anon).

That day a sudden dinner, such
As they had never seen,
Came to their table. And how much
They thanked the saint in green!

Bright as an autumn-leaf in bloom
Their mother moved, and yet
That night—the absence in her room
Made cheek and pillow wet.

That night the old piano, too,
Grieved like a living thing,—
For the blonde boy, right well it knew,
Had vanished with the King.

(The King, I said, but, on my word,
It's quite another thing,—
Somewhere in history I have heard
The Queen was then the King.[1])

[1] "*Long live our King—Maria Theresa!*"

Into a place of shining state
The child-musician went,
In violet velvet, to await
Court-kiss and compliment.

. . . And lo, a palace maiden bright,
A vision to admire,
A creature made of rose and white
And gold, in brave attire!

The boy raised his flower-face as she
Passed him with slow regret:
"I say, and will you marry me,
Miss Marie Antoinette?"

"I dare not; what would mother say?—
I mean the Empress, child,"
The enchanted princess answered. They
Who listened stared and smiled.

She tossed her shining head a bit,
With one bright backward glance;
And Wolfgang Mozart wept when it
Gilded the axe of France.

PASSING THE GIPSY CAMP.

So, here they are on the hills again;
  They always come with the robins hither.
But where do they stay when the wind and rain
  Make the women's faces wither?

They come from Egypt, as I have heard.
  (Didn't Pharaoh look like that brown fellow?)
Yes, picturesque is a right fine word
  For rags in scarlet and yellow.

See the wide straw hats, the purplish hair,
  The doubtful eyes, and the graceless graces;
The tents, and the wild fires, here and there,
  In the greenest, shyest places.

The oldest, wisest of all comes here.
  Last May her promise was sweet as honey,—
(I wish, with the interest of a year,
  She would give me back my money!)

What did she say? Why, she only said,
Frowning a trifle, and bending double,
(Never a star had the grey cheat read,)
"Wait, lady, you have seen trouble."

How did she know? (Why, I think she knew,
For this one reason, and many others:)
Oh, she knew, at least, that I had seen *you*
At war with your valiant brothers!

She said my trouble would end, forsooth,
And so it will—when the moon is ready
To light my grave. So, it *was* the truth,
But—you look at me too steady!

If you are afraid, then speak her fair
(She isn't a witch like Macbeth's witches;)
But—what should the rosiest children care
For glory and sorrow and riches?

My good, weird woman, (O, what a noise
Of crowing, neighing, babbling and snarling!)
What will become of some poor little boys?——
Yes, the youngest *is* a darling!

. . . There! she will turn one's head with the stuff
That dreams are made of, if one will let her!
I can tell you, and true enough,
Something as good, or better.

Never the President will you be,
None of you—not if you do grow older;
Nor the greatest of generals—bright with three
Stars or so, on the shoulder.

But the pretty summers will come to you,
With blossoms to find and wings to follow;
And I 'd say a world where strawberries grew,
Of a truth was not quite hollow.

Sometimes you will come to grief, no doubt.
Most of us do. But we have to take it.
. . . Oh, I should have left the trouble out
Of this world—had I helped to make it!

At last you will shut your eyes and forget
That red-birds fly, or that cow-bells tinkle;
And sleep, though the suns shall rise and set,—
Oh, longer than Rip Van Winkle!

THE WATCH OF A SWAN.

I READ somewhere that a swan, snow-white,
In the sun all day, in the moon all night,
Alone by a little grave would sit
Waiting, and watching it.

Up out of the lake her mate would rise,
And call her down with his piteous cries
Into the waters still and dim;—
With cries she would answer him.

Hardly a shadow would she let pass
Over the baby's cover of grass;
Only the wind might dare to stir
The lily that watched with her.

Do I think that the swan was an angel? Oh,
I think it was only a swan, you know,
That for some sweet reason, wingëd and wild,
Had the love of a bird for a child.

THE THOUGHT OF ASTYANAX BESIDE IÜLUS.[2]

(AFTER READING VIRGIL'S STORY OF ANDROMACHE IN EXILE.)

YES, all the doves begin to moan,—
But it is not the doves alone.
Some trouble, that you never heard
In any tree from breath of bird,
That reaches back to Eden lies
Between your wind-flower and my eyes.

I fear it was not well, indeed,
Upon so sad a day to read
So sad a story. But the day
Is full of blossoms, do you say,—
And how the sun does shine? I know.
These things do make it sadder, though.

You'd cry, if you were not a boy,
About this mournful tale of Troy?
Then do not laugh at me, if I—
Who am too old, you know, to cry—
Just hide my face a while from you,
Down here among these drops of dew.

. . . Must I for sorrow look so far?
This baby headed like a star,
Afraid of Hector's horse-hair plume
(His one sweet child, whose bitter doom
So piteous seems—oh, tears and tears!—)
Has he been dust three thousand years?

Yet when I see his mother fold
The pretty cloak she stitched with gold
Around another boy, and say:
"He would be just your age to-day,
With just your hands, your eyes, your hair"—
Her grief is more than I can bear.

A TRIUMPH OF TRAVEL.

AT EDINBURGH.

THERE rose the tragic palace towers
  Against the moon. (The tale was true!)
The Prince's Gardens faint with flowers
  And still with statue-spectres grew.

There, on its rock, the Castle lay,
  An awful shadow-shape forlorn,
Among the night-lamps, and, by day—
  The place where James the First was born.

There, for the Covenanters' sake,
  One haunts the grasses of Grey Friars;
There grim John Knox had loved to shake
  His right hand full of ghostly fires.

There, changed to marble, Walter Scott
  Received the world. And Burns of Ayr,
With all his loves and debts forgot,
  A bronze immortal met you there.

No whit the seven-years' stranger cared;
  As under gables high and still
Through immemorial dust he fared,
  He spoke his heart out with a will:

"I 'm tired of Holyrood, that 's what!
  And all the other things," he said;
"There 's nothing in it! She is not;—
  I mean Queen Mary. She is dead.

"I 'm glad I did just one thing there."
  (In vain they showed him "Rizzio's bluid.")
"I put my hand on every chair
  That said 'Don't Touch' at Holyrood!"

THE STORY OF A STORM.

[TOLD BY A LITTLE BOY WHO HAD HEARD "STORIES FROM HOMER."]

"THINGS floated away and the day turned dark
  And papa he wasn't at home, you know;
And we didn't have any dove or ark,
  Nor mountain where we could go,
Like they used to have, one other year,—
That time when the other flood was here.

"Then, the wind kept blowing the oak-tree down,
  (The Lord didn't know about the nest!)
And I thought this world was going to drown.
  ——Did Louis tell you the rest?
Well, if he didn't—well then—well,
I think—Somebody will have to tell.

"Now, this was the way: One other night
  (I wish that Louis had told you then)
When the moon was red—why, we had a fight
  About one of Homer's men.

(That is the reason we didn't speak.)
He said that Hector wasn't a Greek!

"But I thought it wouldn't do to die
And not say even one single word
To Louis before I went to the sky,—
So I told him about the bird,
And the other birds out there in the nest
That their mother hadn't even dressed!

"If it hadn't been for the rain, you see,
We never could have been friends again.
And, who would I have to play with me—
If it hadn't been for the rain?
And Louis said he was glad to speak,
For he *thought* that Hector wasn't a Greek!"

THE COMING OUT OF HER DOLL.

YOUNG GIRL-GRADUATE TO HER MOTHER.

"Now I begin to think it's time that Rose
  Should wear a train. She's a young lady now.
You really cannot guess how much she knows.
  (She's read some charming novels, anyhow.)

"How sweet she'd look in a Commencement dress,
  White satin and illusion, and some pearls.
Her gloves must have six buttons, and—I guess
  She'd get more flowers than all the other girls.

"I fancy she should have some company.
  (Papa, he always comes home late and tired.)
And if she only had—some one, you see,
  To take her out, she would be much admired.

"Oh, you forget. You brought her home to me
Once on my birthday, years and years ago.
She could not be a baby yet, you see;—
Why, then I was a child myself, you know!"

IN STREET AND GARDEN.

I.

A CHILD'S CONCLUSION.

"MAMMA," he said, "you ought to know
The place. It's name is wicked, though.
Not China. No. But if you fell
Through China you would be there! Well.

"Fred said somebody very bad,
Named Satan, stayed down there, and had
Oh, such a fire to burn things! You
Just never mind. It can't be true.

"Because I've digged and digged to see
Where all that fire could ever be,
And looked and looked down through the dark,
And never saw a single spark.

"But Heaven is sure; because if I
Look up, I always see the sky—
Sometimes the gold-gates shine clear through—
And when you see a thing, it's true!"

II.

SELF-COMFORTED.

THE ragged child across the street
Stared at the child that looked so sweet:

"I'll have a whiter dress than you,
And wear some prettier rosebuds, too;

"And not be proud a bit," she said,
"I thank you, miss,—when I am dead."

III.

LITTLE GUIDO'S LOST PICTURES.

THE world may keep the best he gave to it.
That may be worth the world itself. Who knows?
Here, you who are his namesake, come and sit,
And read about him, by this budding rose.

The world may keep the Aurora. As for me,
I'd rather see the pictures that he drew
In the divine dust, there, of Italy,
When Guido was a sweet, dark boy like you.

THE LITTLE COWHERD.

"COME, look at her and you will love her.
Go, lead her now through pleasant places,
And teach her that our New-World's clover
Is sweet as Jersey Island daisies.

"Yes, you may do a little playing
Close to the gate, my pretty warder;
But, meanwhile, keep your cow from straying
Across the elfin people's border."

So to the boy his mother jested
About his light task, lightly heeding,
While in the flowering grass he rested
The magic book that he was reading.

At sundown for the cow's returning
The milkmaid waited long, I 'm thinking.
Hours later, by the moon's weird burning,
Did fairy-folk have cream for drinking?

. . . What of the boy? By hill and hollow,
Through bloom and brier, till twilight ended,
His book had charmed him on to follow
The cow—the one that Cadmus tended!

THEIR HEROIC LESSON.

[LEARNED FROM HOMER.[1]]

I LET the sun stand still, this lonesome day,
And hardly heard the very baby coo,
(Meanwhile the world went on—the other way!)
That I might watch the siege of Troy with you.

The great Achilles (whom we knew) was there—
His shining shield was what we knew him by;
And Hector with his plume of horse's hair
Frightened his child and laughed to hear it cry.

Poor Hector! Never sorrow for the dead,
In these three thousand piteous after years,
Breathed into sweeter words than Helen said
Beside him, through the dropping of her tears.

We grieved with Priam for his gracious son.
Much-wandering Ulysses with his craft
Cheated us through strange seas—and every one
Came straight to grief with him upon his raft.

[1] *Stories from Homer*, by Rev. Alfred J. Church.

Not one among you but could draw his bow,
After its rest in Ithaca, and bring
A suitor down!—In the dark backward, oh,
How sad the swallow-twitter of its string!

Now, that it's time to shut the shadowy book,
(Ah me, they clash together, left and right,
And Greek meets Greek—or Trojan! Only look!)—
What have you learned from it? You say: "To fight!"

A NEW KNIGHT.

TO A SCHOOLBOY.

HERE you sit with a picture-book,
  And stare at a knight with his armour on,
While the bird that waited for you to look
  At his scarlet coat is surely gone.
He sings too low and he sings too near?—
It is Roland's horn you would like to hear?

Why, the horn of Roland was only blown
  Because there was something wrong, you know,
When the world was dark. But the world has grown
  A trifle brighter since then, and so
We are looking around for some new knight
Whose horn shall tell us of something right.

You like the one in the picture best?
Oh, he *does* look well in his plume and steel;
But only fancy if you were dressed
In that odd fashion, how you would feel—
Riding along, while the boys looked through
The schoolroom windows and laughed at you!

You would storm some fortress?—You never will,
You sleep and you dream too much for that.
Take care lest the boy below the hill,
With the one wild rose in his torn straw hat,
Who climbs the rocks, while they 're dim with dew,
To bring you milk, make his squire of you!

THE STORY OF LITTLE HENRY.

[AN INCIDENT FROM THE NEWSPAPER.]

YES, brown and rosy, perhaps, like you,
Was the little child they have not found;
Or perhaps his eyes, like yours, were blue,
And his poor sweet head faint-golden too—
The little child who was drowned.

I hardly think his mother was right—
Did she have it?—not to give him the bread;
But he shut the door, and then—"Good night;"
(Yes, he went alone and without any light)—
"I'll never come home," he said.

Poor little child, he was seven years old.
Why, the bird's wild nest was new in the tree;
There were roses enough for him to hold
In his two small hands. ——But the river is cold
In the summer, even, you see.

From the trouble of tears where did he go?—
Where did he go with his two bare feet?
That life was bitter he seemed to know,
(What manner of bread did he think to eat?)—
Did he know that death was sweet?

THE OLD KING'S ATONEMENT.

TOLD TO A BOY ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

THIS is the story that a dead man writ—
  Five hundred years ago it must be, quite;
Worlds full of children listened once to it,
  Who do not ask for stories now at night.

Worlds full of children, who have followed him,
  The King they learned to love and to forgive,
About whose feet the North-snows once lay dim,
  To the sweet land where he has gone to live.

He was a boy whose purple cap could show
  As true a peacock's-plume as ever fanned
Bright royal hair, but in the gracious glow
  Of his fair head strange things, it seems, were planned:

"To be a prince is well enough," thought he,
"But then would it not be a braver thing
To be—my father, only young! To be,"
He whispered, oh, so low—"to be the King!—

"My father, who may live for years and years.
And I meanwhile?—Prince Henry to the last!
Sin, by God's grace, may be washed out with tears,
And some day I'll have time to pray and fast."

He blew a blast that wailed from field to field;
Then, with his sword's point hurled his father down,
And bared his own dark forehead, and revealed
Thereon the sudden lightning of the crown.

But soon that fire of jewels round his head
Burned to his heart. He sat forlorn with grief:
"We'll send across the mountains there," he said,
"To our great Priest in Italy for relief."

His Holiness sat thinking in his town
Of Rome five minutes, or, it may be, more;
His scarlet Cardinals pulled their brave hats down,
And thought as Cardinals never thought before.

"Tell him," the reverend Father said, "to build
Strong churches, and give freely of his gold
To our poor brothers." So his realm was filled
With monks and abbeys. But—shall truth be told?—

His father's shadow would not let him be,—
Till, one fine night, out of the pleasant skies,
Mary looked down, remembering that he
Was once a child, with sweet half-human eyes:

"He shall be glad again, for he shall make
The little ones glad in memory of my Son,"
She said. Her aureole flashed the King awake;
He thought, "Let my Lord's Mother's will be done."

So from his head the cruel crown he shook,
And from his breast the ermine cloak he tore,
And, wrapped in serge, his lonesome way he took
In the weird night from dreaming door to door.

A very Saint of Christmas in the moon,
Followed by glimmering evergreens and toys,
The old King looked. And did they wake too soon,
Those blonde-haired, blue-eyed, far-back girls and boys?

I only know that still the peasants say,
In his far country, that a strange King walks
All night before the Lord Christ's glad birthday,
And leaves no track—a King who never talks!

And sometimes children, stealing from their bed,
To look if the slow morning yet be near,
Have seen his sweeping beard and hooded head,
And grey, still smile, with never any fear.

They know the dawn will light the loveliest things,
Left in the silence by their silent friend.
They know the strange King is the best of kings,
And mean to love him till the world shall end.

THE CHRISTENING.

In vain we broider cap and cloak, and fold
The long robe, white and rare;
In vain we serve on dishes of red gold,
Perhaps, the rich man's fare;
In vain we bid the fabled folk who bring
All gifts the world holds sweet:
This one, forsooth, shall give the child to sing;
To move like music this shall charm its feet;
This help the cheek to blush, the heart to beat.

Unto the christening there shall surely come
The Uninvited Guest,
The evil mother, weird and wise, with some
Sad purpose in her breast.

Yea, and though every spinning-wheel be stilled
In all the country round,
Behold, the prophecy must be fulfilled;
The turret with the spindle will be found,
And the white hand will reach and take the wound.

COMFORT THROUGH A WINDOW.

(CHILD WITHIN TO TRAMP WITHOUT.)

It 's not so nice here as it looks,
With china that keeps breaking so,
And five of Mr. Tennyson's books
Too fine to look in—is it, though?

If you just had to sit here (Well!)
In satin chairs too blue to touch,
And look at flowers too sweet to smell,
In vases—would you like it much?

If you see any flowers, they grow,
And you can find them in the sun.
These are the ones we buy, you know,
In winter-time—when there are none!

Then you can sit on rocks, you see,
And walk about in water, too—
Because you have no shoes! Dear me!
How many things they let you do!

Then you can sleep out in the shade
All day, I guess, and all night too,
Because—you know, you 're not afraid
Of other fellows just like you!

You have no house like this, you know,
(Where mamma 's cross, and ladies call)—
You have the world to live in, though,
And that 's the prettiest place of all!

HIS MOTHER'S WAY.[3]

"My Mamma just knows how to cry
About an old glove or a ring,
Or even a stranger going by
The gate, or—almost anything!

"She cried till both her eyes were red
About *him*, too. (I saw her, though!)
And he was just a ——, Papa said.
(We have to call them that, you know.)

"She cried about the shabbiest shawl,
Because it cost too much to buy;
But Papa cannot cry at all,
For he 's a man. And that is why!

"Why, if his coat was not right new,
And if the yellow bird would die
That sings, and my white kitten too,
Or even himself, *he* would not cry.

"He said that he would sleep to-night
With both the pistols at his head,
Because that ragged fellow might
Come back. That's what my Papa said!

"But Mamma goes and hides her face
There in the curtains, and peeps out
At him, and almost spoils the lace;—
And he is what she cries about!

'She says he looks so cold, so cold,
And has no pleasant place to stay!
Why can't he work? He is not old;
His eyes are blue—they've not turned grey."

So the boy babbled. . . . Well, sweet sirs,
Flushed with your office-fires you write
Your laugh down at such grief as hers;
But are these women foolish quite?

——I know. But, look you, there may be
Stains sad as wayside dust, I say,
Upon your own white hands (ah, me!)
No woman's tears can wash away.

One sees her baby's dimple hold
More love than you can measure. . . .
Then
Nights darken down on heads of gold,
Till wind and frost try wandering men!

But there are prisons made for such,
Where the strong roof shuts out the snow;
And bread (that you would scorn to touch)
Is served them there? I know, I know.

Ah! while you have your books, your ease,
Your lamp-light leisure, jests, and wine,
Fierce outside whispers, if you please,
Moan, each: "These things are also mine!"

A TRAGEDY OF THE NIGHT.

[AT AN EDINBURGH STREET CROSSING.]

SHE started suddenly from the moving mass.
The wind sprang up and caught her by the shawl,
And held her like a thing that dared not pass,—
Then shook her for an instant. That was all.

Once beautiful, and still almost a child!
She wore her wet hair round her with a grace.
I saw the great eyes staring black and wild
As the scared lamplights shuddered from her face.

Upon her track there followed such a cry:
"Will you come back, or no?" was all it said,—
"Will you come back, or no?" The Voice wailed by;
On—to the Pit?—the girlish phantom fled.

THE CONFESSION OF MY NEIGHBOUR.

[AFTER SHE HAD BEEN FORTUNATE.]

YES, this is what my neighbour said that night,
In the still shadow of her stately house,
(Fortune came to her when her head was white,)
What time dark leaves were weird in withering boughs,
And each late rose sighed with its latest breath,
"This sweet world is too sweet to end in death."

But this is what my neighbour said to me:
"I grieved my youth away for that or this.
I had upon my hand the ring you see,
With pretty babies in my arms to kiss,
And one man said I had the sweetest eyes,
He was quite sure, this side of Paradise.

"But then our crowded cottage was so small,
And spacious grounds would blossom full in sight;
Then one would fret me with an India shawl,
And one flash by me in a diamond's light;
And one would show me wealth of precious lace,
And one look coldly from her painted face.

"I did not know that I had everything,
Till—I remembered it. Ah me! ah me!
I who had ears to hear the wild-bird sing,
And eyes to see the violets. . . . It must be
A bitter fate that jewels the grey hair,
Which once was golden and had flowers to wear.

"In the old house, in my old room, for years,
The haunted cradle of my little ones gone
Would hardly let me look at it for tears.
. . . O my lost nurslings! I stay on and on,
Only to miss you from the empty light
Of my low fire—with my own grave in sight.

"In the old house, too, in its own old place,
Handsome and young, and looking towards the gate
Through which it flushed to meet me, is a face
For which, ah me! I never more shall wait—
For which, ah me! I wait for ever, I
Who for the hope of it, can surely die.

"Young men write gracious letters here to me,
That ought to fill this mother-heart of mine.

The youth in this one crowds all Italy!
  This glimmers with the far Pacific's shine.
The first poor little hand that warmed my breast
Wrote this—the date is old: you know the rest.

"Oh, if I only could have back my boys,
  With their lost gloves and books for me to find,
Their scattered playthings and their pleasant noise!
  . . . I sit here in the splendour growing blind,
With hollow hands that backward reach, and ache
For the sweet trouble which the children make."

FRED'S MOTHER.

MASTER HARRY'S COMMENT.

"FRED says his mother cannot tell
One-half the things he asks her. Well!

"She doesn't even know how far
It is straight to that nearest star.

"She only knows the Golden Rule.
—I wonder where she went to school!"

A STRANGE COUNTRY.

It 's a strange story I must tell
Of a strange country, Louis? Well,
The strangest country that I know
Is one where palm-trees do not grow;
It lies within the very reach
  Of your two hands, and blue-birds flit
Among the flowers of pear and peach,
  In pleasant dews, all over it.

In this strange country, then, last night,
A lady in the gracious light
Of garden-lamps and rising moon
(Hush! you may do your guessing soon),
With bits of stone she chose to wear,
  That elfin queens, perhaps, had lost,
Outflashed the fire-flies in the air,—
  And what a sum her party cost!

This morning, with a beard as white
As his own shroud should be, in sight
Of her high windows' precious lace,
A man—with, oh! so sad a face
One scarce could look at it for tears—
  Stood with a staff, and slowly said:
"It's the first time in all these years;
  But, Madam, I must ask for bread."

The lady, lily-like, within
Her hands, that did not toil nor spin,
Held all sweet things this world can give;
The man, for just the breath to live,
Early and late, in sun and snow,
  Had done his best. —I thought you knew!
. . . It must be a strange country, though,
  Where such strange stories can be true.

A NEIGHBOURHOOD INCIDENT.

"DID you know, Mamma, that the man was dead
  In that pretty place, there under the hill?"
"So, with only the clouds to cover his head,
  He died down there in that old stone mill;
He died, in the wind and sleet, and—mark
This truth, fair sirs—in the dark.

"(Yes, a pretty place!) In the summer-time,
  When the birds sing out of the leaves for joy,
And the blue wild morning-glories climb
  On the broken walls, it is pretty, my boy:
But not when the world around is snow
And the river is ice below.

"Men looked sometimes from the morning cars
  Toward the place where he lay in the winter sun,
And said, through the smoke of their dear cigars,
  That something really ought to be done.
Then talked of the President, or the play,
Or the war—that was farthest away."

"Do you know when his father wanted some bread,
One time, by the well there? Wasn't he old!
I mean that day when the blossoms were red
On the cliffs, and it wasn't so very cold"—
"And I gave him the little I well could spare
When I looked at his face and hair.

"Then we met him once—it was almost night—
Out looking for berries among the briers,
(So withered and weird, such a piteous sight!)
And gathering wood for their gypsy fires.
'No, the young man is no better. No, no,'
He would keep on saying, so low."

"But the women there would not work, they say."
"Why, that is the story; but, if it be true,
There are other women, I think, to-day
Who will not work, yet, their whole lives through,
All lovely things from the seas and lands
Drop into their idle hands.

"But these would not work, so their brother—and ours—
Deserved to die in that desolate place?
Shall we send regrets and the usual flowers?
Shall we stop and see the upbraiding face,

As it lies in the roofless room forlorn,
For the sake of a dead man's scorn?

"He did his best, as none will deny,
  At serving the Earth to pay for his breath;
So she gave him early (and why not, why?)
  The one thing merciful men call Death.
Ah! gift that must be gracious indeed,
Since it leaves us nothing to need!

". . . As for us, sweet friends, let us dress and sleep,
  Let us praise our pictures and drink our wine.
Meanwhile, let us drive His starving sheep
  To our good Lord Christ, on the heights divine;
For the flowerless valleys are dim and drear,
And the winds right bitter, down here."

North Bend, Ohio.

QUESTIONS OF THE HOUR.

[MARIAN, SIX YEARS OLD.]

"Do angels wear white dresses, say?
Always, or only in the summer? Do
Their birthdays have to come like mine, in May?
Do they have scarlet sashes then, or blue?

"When little Jessie died last night,
How could she walk to Heaven—it is so far?
How did she find the way without a light?
There wasn't even any moon or star.

"Will she have red or golden wings?
Then will she have to be a bird, and fly?
Do they take men like presidents and kings
In hearses with black plumes clean to the sky?

"How old is God? Has He grey hair?
Can He see yet? Where did He have to stay
Before—you know—He had made—Anywhere?
Whom does He pray to—when He has to pray?

"How many drops are in the sea?
How many stars?——well, then, you ought to know
How many flowers are on an apple-tree?
How does the wind look when it doesn't blow?

"Where does the rainbow end? And why
Did—Captain Kidd—bury the gold there? When
Will this world burn? And will the firemen try
To put the fire out with the engines then?

"If you should ever die, may we
Have pumpkins growing in the garden, so
My fairy godmother can come for me,
When there 's a prince's ball, and let me go?

"Read Cinderella just once more——
What makes—men's other wives—so mean?" I know
That I was tired, it may be cross, before
I shut the painted book for her to go.

Hours later, from a child's white bed
I heard the timid, last queer question start:
"Mamma, are you—my stepmother?" it said.
The innocent reproof crept to my heart.

TWO VISIONS OF FAIRYLAND.

ONE with her blue, faint eyes could dream too much;
One, rosily sun-stained, wanted things to touch.

She met him on the stair with half a blush:
"How late you sleep!" he said. She whispered "Hush;

"I read that painted book last night, and so
I dreamed about Prince Charming"—— "Did you, though?

"Why, I was wide awake in time to see
All Fairyland! I wish you'd been with me."

"What was it like?" "Oh, it was green and still,
With rocks and wild red roses and a hill,

"And some shy birds that sang far up the air—
And such a river, all in mist, was there."

"Where was it?" Why the moon went down on one
Side, and upon the other rose the sun!"

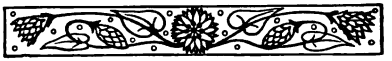
"How does one get there?" "Oh, the path lies
through
The dawn, you little sleeper, and the dew."

THE ONE OF TWO.

"LOVE him more," they said to me,
"Since you need not love the other;
He is sweet as sweet can be!"
And—they took away his brother.

"Only give him back his place."
Brown head nestling near and nearer,
Little laughing two-years' face,
You are dear—if *he* is dearer!

"Let him sleep? He cannot care?
Love is only for the living?"—
Still this breathing child's own share
To the dead one I am giving.



A COIN OF LESBOS.

I THINK how long she held it with a smile
(Her jealous lyre complaining on her breast),
Dust thick on everything!—and she, the while,
Forgetting it and Phaon and the rest!

With those great eyes, that had not longed as yet
To lose their tears in kindred brine, ah me!
Fixed on its precious glimmer: "It will get——
What will it get?" she murmured: "Let me see.

"Some jewel that will more become my head
Than withering leaves of laurel? Nay, not so.
At least, I think, some lovelier robe," she said,
"Than any woman weareth that I know!"

So, years ere that deep glass wherein she gazed
With her last look had flashed it to the sun,
So mused, I fancy, the most overpraised
Of women who have sung on earth—save one!

TWO BABIES IN BED.

[LITTLE GUY'S ANSWER.]

"THINK of the baby at home," I said;
"How pretty he is to kiss.
It is white and warm in his little bed,
It is dark and cold in this."

He laughed and said, with his hand in the dew
Of the sweet small grave close by,
Where the grass of the lonesomest summer grew:
"*This* Baby does not cry."

"IT IS NOT YESTERDAY."

[THE ANSWER OF A CHILD.]

POOR red flower of a mouth, you quiver so;—
What is the matter? Tell me—if you know.
Why don't you laugh out in your own one way?
"Because—because it is not yesterday."

I know, I know. Oh, yesterday was sweet.
It laid its one blue blossom at your feet.
It let you see that gracious old man pass,
Leading his cow to find the glad first grass.

To-day is dark, dark, dark. Somewhere I see
Quick lightning, and the sleet is on the tree
Where the bird, fluttering, thought about a nest.
And so you cry. Well, sometimes tears are best.

I do not know but I could hide my face
Deep in my arm, if I but had your grace,
And shed more tears than you can count, I say,
Because—ah me, it is not yesterday!

REQUIESCAT.

Lie still. You need not love nor gold
Nor name, to make the sum complete.
The world no living hand may hold
Falls at a dead man's feet.

Lie still. You climbed for flowers, and found
They grow not well in highest air.
Lie still: the rock, the thorn, the wound
Were yours;—you had your share.

Lie still. This is the end, they say.
Lie still. The peasant and the king,
A little weary, walk this way;
The bride leaves here her ring.

Your virtues? Though the priest speak true,
You need not blush—your face is hid.
The roses life denied to you
Are on your coffin lid.

THE STORY OF A SHAWL.

[1879.]

My child, is it so strange, indeed,
This tale of the Plague in the East, you read?—

This tale of how a soldier found
A gleaming shawl of silk, close-wound,

(And stained, perhaps, with two-fold red)
About a dead man's careless head?

He took the treasure on his breast
To one he loved. We know the rest.

If Russia shudders near and far,
From peasant's hut to throne of Czar:

If Germany bids an armed guard
By sun and moon keep watch and ward

Along her line, that they who fly
From death, ah me! shall surely die:

This trouble for the world was all
Wrapped in that soldier's sweetheart's shawl.

——Pray God no other lovers bring
Some gift as dread in rose or ring.

THE FIRST RED-BIRD.

[AFTER THE BIRD-FAMINE OF 1880.]

LOOK at him there!—that lonesome tree might break
Quick into bees and blossoms for his sake.

Through this long time of frost and fire, you see,
Safe in the hollow of God's hand was he.

He has not faded in the awful snows;—
His plumes are redder than the wild red rose.

Yet what I read to you was true. Alack!
If he remember it, he might wear black.

Yes, all I read you. Oh, the piteous words
That sobbed the story of the last-year's birds!

The birds, the sweetest of all things called sweet,
Starved in dim places, beaten off by sleet.

Down from the boughs close to the ground they fell;
Down from the heights of chasm and cloud as well.

Yet oh, too light of heart, too light of wings,
Here, at the promise of the leaf, he sings!

Ah, Red-Bird, hush, and wait you within call,
Till for your dead a tear or two can fall.

No. After all, you do a wiser thing,—
Sing for the rest, who never more can sing.

AT THE GRAVE OF A SUICIDE.

You sat in judgment on him, you whose feet
  Were set in pleasant places, you who found
The Bitter Cup he dared to break still sweet,
  And shut him from your consecrated ground.

Yet, if you think the dead man sleeps a whit
  Less soundly in his grave, come look, I pray.
A violet has consecrated it.
  Henceforth you need not fear to walk this way.

"STOP THE CLOCK."

LET this red flower here on the cliff stay red;
Let that glad bird sing always in the tree;
Let baby keep this pretty yellow head
And these two dimples,—do you say to me?

Let these same clouds make this same sky all gold;
Let these same strawberries last? (You 'll tell me how?)
Let 's take the world up in our arms and hold
It where it is, and make forever now?

Let 's sit here always in this wind and sun,
And hear the water dripping from the rock?
Come, then, and tell me how it can be done.
——What, ho, within there! Some one stop the clock!

THE FAIRY'S GIFT.

A STORY TOLD TO A LITTLE BOY.

ABOVE his cradle such a glimmer of green
As might be worn in May by elfin folk
His mother in the dew had sometimes seen,
And in her heart she knew their threshold oak
Held some leaf-coloured eerie hood and cloak.

For once, when in a wood at dusk she found
And cared with tears for the forlornest bird,
That sang the sweeter through the huntsman's wound,
A promise made of music she had heard—
Too fine to trust to any mortal word.

But through the window of a dream, alack!
Her brooding secret flew at last; and when
Could any woman call a secret back?
Her peasant husband lordliest of men
Grew, as he whispered the weird story, then.

He talked of days when under his own vine
(The fig-tree did not grow in that North land)
He should sit down and drink a baron's wine,
Or climb his feudal stairs, you understand,
With gold to scatter from his gracious hand.

Meanwhile he folded his strong arms and swore
The earth might all run wild, he did not care;
For he had seen, just three times and no more,
Under the moon, around his baby's hair
A coil of gold such as a king might wear.

And the young Princess Beautiful (even she,
The one you know!) would certainly come down
From her dim palace, in the time to be,
And kindly offer him her father's crown;
Spite of that aged man's imperial frown.

So year by year, as blacker grew the bread,
The growing boy seemed stronger, I confess;
Though with what fare the gentle child was fed
The wisest of the people could not guess.
(Did honey-dews drop in that wilderness?)

Oh, much the women wondered that they found
So little beauty in his brown, shy face.
How should a head like his be ever crowned
When there were brighter almost any place?
(True, he was half a bird in voice and grace.)

Yet if he only touched the wildest rose
The blossom seemed enchanted by his hand.
. . . And still the Princess came not. I suppose
She feared her greybeard father, whose command
Had bound the wrong ring on her hapless hand.

But once in a rude chapel there had been
A wedding. He was not the groom that day.
The loveliest maiden that was ever seen
Lifted her eyes, and as he looked away
His face flushed like a flower, the old people say.

What did he do? As years and years went by
He tended sheep for some small insolent lord
(And loved the lambs), until there went a cry
That said: "There is no help—take up the sword."
Was he a General, too? No, on my word!

And in the fight, with his last breath he sent
The water that his mouth had burned for so
Unto another soldier. Oh, I meant
Sir Philip Sidney? But I did not, though:—
I meant a greater with no name, you know.

The people murmured after he was dead,
Saying, "He helped us. Did the Fairy, then,
Forget to help *him?*" But a faint voice said,
Out of his mother's lips, "I say again,
Never did Fairy break an oath to men.

"The sweetest gift she promised him—and, oh!
The sweetest gift she gave him upon earth.
Could this be gold or glory? Surely, no;
Your king could tell you what these things are worth,
Shivering to-night beside his lonesome hearth."

What can it be, then, if it was not gold,
Nor pearl, nor anything,—you ask of me?
The sweetest thing on earth you cannot hold
Out in your hand for all the world to see.
He hid it in his heart. What could it be?

THE LITTLE STOCKINGS.

[HUNG UP FOR GIFTS ON CHRISTMAS EVE.]

He will see sweet stockings, cunning and new,
Warm in scarlet, and dainty in white—
Stockings that never have crept in a shoe—
Waiting his morning's enchanted light.

And other glad stockings, that he should know—
Grown larger, perhaps, than they were last year!—
In many a pretty, half-sleepy row
They wonder, no doubt, if he is near!

This Saint of the children, who loves them so,
Fairily filling each precious space,
Will touch clear dreams with his kiss—and go
With tears, I think, in his tender face.

Ah, spite of his furs, he will shiver, I fear,
At the thought of some stockings, bright and small,
Whose curious looks are no longer here,
Awake for him, by the lonesome wall!

Oh, you whose little hands reach no more
  Towards his grey, kind beard in their dimpled play,
Whose little feet passed through the great, dim Door,
  With never a step nor a sound, away:

Have you found Another, who lights with love
  His Birthday Tree for your charméd eyes?
Do you see in its branches the snow-white Dove?
  Is it fair with the flowering fruit of the skies?

THE NIGHT COMETH.

FOLD up the work wherein, hour after hour,
(Only to sew my shroud, then, was I born?)
I've wrought faint pictures, look, of many a flower
And many a thorn.

Yea, many a flower. Some bridal blossoms; some
Spell my dead children's names in their sweet way;
One blew in Eden ere the Snake had come;—
And these are they.

Yea, many a thorn. Behold, my hand hath bled
Even in tracing them, so sharp were they,
On this long shivering garment.—Did His head
Wear such, that day?

I can but think me how, before the dew
Melted in sunrise, and when noon was hot,
Till on the dusk my coffin's shadow grew,
I rested not,—

Working forever on this one white thing!
Why, of a truth, it should be fair to see
And sweet to sleep in. Love, you need not bring
Your lamp to me.

Look you,—the graveyard moon ariseth. So,—
That light is for the blind. Now let me be.
Listen!—the graveyard wind. There! I will go.
It calleth me.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE.

THIS is the Master, who but he?—
(Where did you think to find him?)—
Here in the cradle. Come and see.
——Why, surely we *have* to mind him!

Wait; you must be as still as death:
He is sleeping now so sweetly.
One hasn't the right to draw one's breath
Till he is awake completely.

Should he want the wedding-ring from her hand,
(No matter if he would lose it)
There is not a lady in all the land
Could have the heart to refuse it.

Should he choose to reach for a crown, I say,
(It is gold, and he could not break it,)
Why, is there a king in the world to-day
Who would not let him take it?

What cardinal would not lend him his hat,
To give him a minute's pleasure?
And where is the good, grey beard, as to that,
Which he could not pull at leisure?

But, here he is!—do you see his eyes?
Now what do you want? It may be
He will hear you, after his first surprise,
——There 's nothing you want of the baby!

But everything is his, you know,
(And no matter whose the rest is!)
From the blue little bird that chirps so low
To the oak-tree where its nest is!

——It is only *work* that you want, indeed?
Could you do the work of twenty,
The baby will give you all you need;
Ask him: he has work in plenty!

COUNSEL.

[IN THE SOUTH.]

My boy, not of your will nor mine
  You keep the mountain path and wait,
Restless, for evil gold to shine
  And hold you to your fate.

A stronger Hand than yours gave you
  The lawless sword. You know not why.
That you must live is all too true,
  And—other men must die.

My boy, be brigand, if you must.
  But face the traveller in his track;
Stand one to one,—and never thrust
  The dagger in his back.

. . . . My boy, if Christ must be betrayed,
  And you must the betrayer be,
Oh, marked before the worlds were made!
  What help is there for me?

Ah, tell the prophets in their graves,
Who ask of you such blood as this,
"I take Him, then, with swords and staves,—
I will not with a kiss!"

HER DOUBTFUL COMPLIMENT.

"Oh, mother," sobbed the troubled little maid,
"Please tell me, will you, that it is not true;
It breaks my heart: that hateful Rose, she said—
Just think of it!—she said I looked like you!"

THE SULTAN'S CONFESSION.

THE richest Sultan of the East once said,
And stooped, to hide his blush, his turbaned head:

"Yes, I am great. Behold, I can command
Armies of slaves through all my flowering land.

"But I could not command the worm, so small
None sees, that ate the dead Sultana's shawl.

"She, sweetest of the sweet, who left these eyes
For ever dark, to lighten Paradise,—

"The folds that touched her lovely form to me
Were more than all my jewelled treasury."

THE NIGHT-MOTH'S COMMENT.

[ALIGHTED UPON A YELLOW AUTOGRAPH LETTER OF CHESTERFIELD.]

HERE is a gracious letter that one writ
Who thought this rugged world of lands and seas,
Among whose suns and rains we shadows flit—
In sorrow and in mystery, if you please—
A place to be polite and take one's ease.

My lord, above your old, dead courtesy,
Out of the light of stars, in lovelier light,
All summer-green and glad, this moth to me
Seems Nature's comment, clear and brief and bright,
On man's poor dusty vanity, to-night.

THE GIFT OF TEARS.

THE legend says: In Paradise
God gave the world to man. Ah me!
The woman lifted up her eyes:
"Woman, I have but tears for thee."
But tears? And she began to shed,
Thereat, the tears that comforted.

(No other beautiful woman breathed,
No rival among men had he.
The seraph's sword of fire was sheathed,
The golden fruit hung on the tree.
Her lord was lord of all the earth,
Wherein no child had wailed its birth.)

"Tears to a bride?" "Yea, therefore tears."
"In Eden?" "Yea, and tears therefore."
Ah, bride in Eden, there were fears
In the first blush your young cheek wore,
Lest that first kiss had been too sweet,
Lest Eden withered from your feet!

Mother of women! Did you see
How brief your beauty, and how brief,
Therefore, the love of it must be,
In that first garden, that first grief?
Did those first drops of sorrow fall
To move God's pity for us all?

Oh, sobbing mourner by the dead—
One watcher at the grave grass-grown!
Oh, sleepless for some darling head
Cold-pillowed on the prison-stone,
Or wet with drowning seas! He knew,
Who gave the gift of tears to you!

A RAINY DAY.

[FOR A LITTLE BOY.]

Do? Like the things in the garden. Oh,
Just keep quiet awhile and grow.

Do? Like the bird. It shuts its wings
And waits for the sun? Do you hear?—it sings!

Do? Like the lilies. Let it beat;
Nestle below it and be sweet.

LET US GO TO FAIRYLAND.

LET us go to Fairyland
From the rain and from the snow.
Somewhere in the enchanted sand
May be footsteps we should know.
Come, I prithee, let us go.

Yes, the child we loved was fair.
But too fragile was his hand.
But too golden was his hair.
He has gone to Fairyland;—
Looking thither need we stand?

NOTES.

(1) Polycrates, the too-fortunate King, whose story is told by Herodotus.

(2) The pathetic little episode to which this piece refers is related in the third book of Virgil's *Æneid*, lines 482-492, where the poet describes Æneas meeting Andromache during his wanderings, after the fall of Troy, with his son Ascanius (also called Iülus). To the latter Andromache gives some garments wrought by herself, and in presenting them she recalls her own boy Astyanax, who, in obedience to an oracle, had been thrown headlong from the walls of Troy and killed. This was after the death of Hector, his father, whose parting with Andromache—in which the child "headed like a star," together with "the horse-hair plume," is mentioned—forms one of the most famous passages in the *Iliad* of Homer. The passage in Virgil is literally as follows:—"Andromache, sad with the last parting, brings garments figured over with golden embroidery and a Phrygian cloak for Ascanius, and loads him with woven gifts, and thus speaks,—'Take these, too, my boy, and may they be to thee mementoes of my handiwork, and bear witness to the lasting love of Andromache, Hector's wife; take these last gifts of thy friend, O only image remaining to me of my Astyanax. Just such eyes, just such hands, just such features he had, and he would now be growing up in equal age with thee.'"

(3) Written after reading certain newspaper discussions as to the treatment of the "tramp."

By the same Author.

MRS. PIATT'S SELECT POEMS.

A VOYAGE TO THE FORTUNATE ISLES, AND OTHER POEMS.

BY SARAH M. B. PIATT.

Small Crown 8vo, Cloth, gilt top, 5s.

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES BY HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & Co., BOSTON AND NEW YORK, PRICE $1.50.

Extracts from British Critical Opinions.

The Academy, December 5, 1885.

'The author of these poems and her work are well known on the other side of the Atlantic, and two tiny volumes of verse have recently introduced her very favourably to English readers. The present book contains a rich and excellently selected gathering from Mrs. Piatt's various works, issued in America, and it will, undoubtedly, win a warm welcome from the lovers of poetry among us, and extend the radius of her influence and reputation. Mrs. Piatt's verses are characterised by a distinct and pleasing originality. . . . Nothing more unfailingly distinguishes her poems than the solid kernel of fresh, original thought and feeling in each of them—thought and feeling which are expressed with careful and conscientious artistry. . . . Not a few of the most delicate and successful pieces of the book are to be found in the section titled, "In Company with Children." Here the womanly nature of the poet has full scope. . . . The temptation to quote further from this charming volume is almost irresistible, but we must leave the reader to discover the rest of its dainty and pathetic things for himself. The book entitles its author to a very honourable place in the roll of women poets of our century.'

The St. James's Gazette, November 21, 1885.

'We find that Mrs. Piatt's Muse is the Muse of the American Girl. . . . And we confess, for our own part, that the more completely she is the Muse of the American Girl the better we like her. There is real originality in such pieces as "If I were a Queen," "Caprice at Home," and "After the Quarrel." The reflection on Cleopatra—

> "No coward of my conqueror's race
> Should offer me his blood, I know,
> If I were a Queen—"

is delightfully in the spirit of free Transatlantic criticism. Rhythmically, too, Mrs. Piatt is at her best in these lighter pieces. In "Caprice at Home" there is a pettishness of movement in the verse corresponding excellently to its mood. Take for example, the lines:—

"No, I will not say good-bye,
Not good-bye, nor anything;"

or

"Everything I want I miss.
Oh, a precious world is this"

Very arch, too, is "After the Quarrel," where one girl is consoling another for the loss of her lover:—

"But he will not come?—Why, then,
Is no other within call?
There are men and men, and men—
And these men are brothers all!
Each sweet fault of his you 'll find
Just as sweet in all his kind."

There is so much room in our literature for verse which is playful without being exactly humorous, that it is to be hoped Mrs. Piatt will pursue further a vein in which she is so eminently successful. We have no wish, however, to disparage the more serious efforts of this pleasing and unpretentious writer. Like Miss Ingelow and other disciples of the great but unequal poetess of "Casa Guidi Windows," Mrs. Piatt's mood alternates between a fantastic regret and a heart-broken idealism. She bewails mystically the dead infancies of her growing children, and has dreams about them in a glorified perfection. All this is well summed up in the narrative poem from which the volume takes its title—the poem which tries to force on us the conclusion that

"We leave the Fortunate Isles behind,
The Fortunate Isles to find;"

and abounds in vaguely suggestive imagery, as of the butterflies

"That glitter, homesick for the form
And lost sleep of the worm."

'In "Two Veils" and "Her Cross and Mine," Mrs. Piatt has touched skilfully on the contrast between the world's perils and the safe shelter of the convent. "The Altar at Athens" is a rather striking presentation of the enigma of contending creeds. "The Gift of Empty Hands" and "Everything" are fables of deft invention if trite morality. The first stanza of "To-day" is worth quotation for its easy rendering of a plaintive mood:—

"Ah, real thing of bloom and breath,
I cannot love you while you stay.
Put on the dim, still charm of death,
Fade to a phantom, float away,
And let me call you Yesterday!"

"Asking for Tears" has something of the accent of "Sonnets from the Portuguese." In the more dramatic pieces, like "The Palace-Burner," "There was a Rose," and "A Wall Between," these abrupt artifices are less inappropriate. "A Wall Between," which presents in some nine pages the scene of a husband coming in priest's disguise to the death-bed of his neglected wife, seems to be admirably adapted for recitation. The writer preserves here, as always, both delicacy and taste. The piece is a good one. But we recur to our preference of Mrs. Piatt as the lyrist of whim, the Muse of the American Girl.'

The Irish Monthly, July 1886.

'This woman-poet's poems come to us with a New World freshness and fragrance, superadded to the sweetness and tenderness, which are among the things that never grow old. Some of the poems, in their largeness and freedom, their boldness in seizing, and crying aloud the vague doubts and marvellings which have wearied and pained us all at times, not the less that we have scarcely dared to look them in the face, read like a revelation—a revelation of one's own heart, of a woman's heart. The book is essentially a woman's book, though, in its breadth of treatment, it has often a masculine quality of strength,—it is the book of a woman who is also a wife, and the mother of children, and in the noble attributes of a developed womanliness, the poetry of it must rank almost with the highest. . . . Three women's names suggest themselves to the present writer, as those of distinct and individual singers in our own day—Christina Rossetti, Jean Ingelow, and Alice Meynell, whose one exquisite volume "Preludes," is an embodiment of the purest poetry; and to those three names Sarah Piatt's may now be added as a fourth, for her marked originality and freshness are wonderful, in an age more than a score of hundred years after Solomon bewailed the staleness of all things under the sun. The tenderness, the purity of the book, is beyond all praise; and the curious current and undertone of pathos running through the highest strain—a sadness entirely natural, and not at all a literary quality, as so much present-day sadness seems to be—gives the work an ennobling gravity. From this true, sweet poet one wishes to quote largely, feeling that the poems speak best for their own excellence; but where all is perfect, there is a difficulty in selection. . . . The poem which gives the first book its name is wise and beautiful, and "A Wall Between" contains some of the best things the poet has given us. . . . It has some wonderful passages. . . . Perhaps the short poems are the most perfect, and the style at its best is limpidly clear. . . . Any notice of this book would be incomplete, however abundant its citations, if it failed to quote from the poems concerning children, which, perhaps, more than any other feature, set the book apart from any other book we have ever read. Its insight into child-life, the *naïveté* of a child's thoughts, here so accurately rendered, will make the book especially lovable to grown lovers of children, though here, perhaps, it stops short; it will hardly reach the children themselves, as Hans Andersen, the prophet of children, does; but rather like Mr. R. L. Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verses," it will make the grown reader sigh and wonder at the vivid reflection from his own childhood. . . . And now, with little further quotation, we must leave this lovely and lovable book, in which is contained the cream's cream, the best perfection of the author's work. Let all who love poetry, and happily they are many, read the book for themselves, and know the delight we have felt in its reading. For the delicate grace of the book, the yearning sadness which fills one with a pain better than pleasure, for this laying open of a beautiful heart, we are deeply thankful. . . . We have tried to say little and quote much, because we felt how poorly we could say all the book makes us feel—one could say it, perhaps, better in verse than in prose, where enthusiasm finds hardly a fitting vehicle of expression. Only we thank the writer for the gift she has given us and the world—a gift as perfect and spontaneous as the song of a blackbird, as passionate and innocent as the heart of a rose.'

The Westminster Review, July 1886.

'Many of Mrs. Piatt's verses are concerned with the sayings and doings of children. We are of those who hold that both the pathos and the humour of the

nursery should be reserved for home consumption, but for those who think otherwise with regard to the "Kingdom of Heavenites," as Coleridge called babies, we can safely recommend Mrs. Piatt. Among the more striking poems in this volume are "A Voyage to the Fortunate Isles," "The Longest Death-Watch," and "Twelve Hours Apart." We select for quotation a double quatrain, entitled "Broken Promise."'

Merry England (Review of Professor Robertson's "Children of the Poets"), March 1887.

'Mrs. Piatt is an American writer not yet known to many in England, though quickly recognised by a few. She never writes without thoughts, and her thoughts, though not always concentrated, are always distinct, and with distinctness they have a rare distinction. This beauty of thought will always be, in spite of the perfect things that have been done in mere form, the supreme merit of poetry and of all literature. But as regards utterance also Mrs. Piatt does exquisitely, having a restraint of tone, a moderation of emphasis, of length, which show firm and careful art; and a quite simple vocabulary. One of her loveliest poems is this in the "Children of the Poets." It is headed "Last Words," and is spoken over a little bed at night.'

The Pictorial World, June 3, 1886.

'Mrs. Piatt is an American woman of genius, and the pensive tone and sweet natural music which distinguish her verse have produced, in "A Voyage to the Fortunate Isles," etc., poems of a delicate beauty, not easy to equal, much less surpass, on either side of the Atlantic. The thought, the expression of these poems are alike purely womanly. Mrs. Piatt studies no model, and takes no pattern for her work; she simply expresses herself; hence her verse is just the transparent mantle of her individuality. The natural refinement, the ready sympathy, the tender sentiment, the quiet grace of a thoroughly womanly woman reveal themselves quite unconsciously in every poem; and the musical quality of the verse increases the impression that the reader is listening to the heart-utterances of one of the Imogens or Mirandas to be met with now seldom outside the radiant land where Shakespeare's imagination reigns supreme. . . . The poems "In Company with Children" contain some of the most distinctive and original of Mrs. Piatt's work. She has especial power of entering into the child life, and she is not afraid to let the children speak in her verse as they speak in life. "My Babes in the Wood," "Playing Beggars," "The Little Boy I Dreamed About," "The Baby's Brother," are a few of many poems which occupy in the realm of verse a quiet corner entirely their own. . . . Mrs. Piatt will, we doubt not, as her poems become known to English readers, become popular, or, we should rather say, dear to a wide circle mainly composed of members of her own sex, for she supplies the adequate expression for women whose hearts are tender and true like her own.'

The Dublin Evening Mail, April 7, 1886.

'If Mrs. Piatt's "Irish Garland" contains poetry like that in the volume before us, it ought to be placed forthwith in the best hundred Irish books. . . . Originality, simplicity, tenderness, and a profoundly pathetic sense of things are the notes of Mrs. Piatt's muse. In many passages she reminds us of Mrs. Barrett Browning, but she is more lyrical, less rhetorical. . . . America may be proud of Mrs. Piatt, and we believe is so.'

The Literary World, January 1, 1886.

'One of the finest poems in the book is "The Brother's Hand," founded upon a story of the American Civil War. There is a good deal of power, passion, and pathos in it. It is the longest poem in the book, and is marked by much true feeling and great narrative skill."

London Figaro, February 20, 1886.

'It was high time, though, that acquaintance was made with so charming a writer, who, while reminding us of our Jean Ingelow and Adelaide Proctor, has indubitable originality—and originality, too, of a very rare kind—of her own. . . . In so short a notice it is, indeed, difficult to even name the beauties of her characteristic muse. Allusion must be made, however, to her wonderful, and, as it would seem, intuitive power of analysing child-nature. Many of her poems deal with children, and her happiest and most winsome touches are to be found in them. Mrs. Piatt possesses genuine imagination, and, moreover, that dramatic instinct which helps so greatly to make a poem intense and vivid. . . . But to multiply quotations is impossible, and we must be content with giving the two stanzas with which Mrs. Piatt concludes this delightful volume. She says:—

"Sweet World, if you will hear me now:
I may not own a sounding Lyre
And wear my name upon my brow
Like some great jewel quick with fire.

But let me, singing, sit apart,
In tender quiet with a few,
And keep my fame upon my heart,
A little blush-rose wet with dew."

There is the melody of real poetry here.'

The Saturday Review, March 13, 1886.

'Of all the concourse of singers, ungallantly described in their own land as "female poets," Mrs. Piatt is the most racy and, in a word, the most American. Mr. Stedman finds her charming "at her best," and Miss Preston most judiciously commends her delightful poems of children. Mr. Howells praises her that "she has not written like a man," and the Boston *Repository* takes Mr. Howells to task for praising "the feminine quality" of Mrs. Piatt's muse. For our part, we are at issue with the *Repository* lady (as we must assume the critic to be), and are touched with the felicity of Mr. Howells' remarks. The new selection of Mrs. Piatt's poems should be most welcome to all who seek in American poetry something more than a pale reflex of the British commodity. In the goodly company of poetesses, all dight in their singing robes, Mrs. Piatt's part is that of the *ingénue*. Her poems, with all their whim and inconstancy of mood, are charmingly sincere, artless, piquant, and full of quaint surprise. Her pathos is not less individual, though we like her best in her "Dramatic Persons and Moods," in such poems as "Sometime," "If I were a Queen," "After the Quarrel," "Enchanted," and the like. The reflections of the speaker in the second poem in rejecting the example of all historic queens are exquisitely girl-like and natural, even to the rejection of Cleopatra:—

Then she of Egypt—with the asp
To drain my deadly beauty dry?—
To see my Roman lover clasp
His sword with surer love, and die

Closer to it than me? Not so.
No desert-snake with nursing grace
Should draw my fierce heart's fiercest glow;
No coward of my conqueror's race
Should offer me his blood, I know—
If I were a Queen."

'Very startling is the quaint epigram in the first stanza of "Marble or Dust?":—

"A child, beside a statue, said to me,
With pretty wisdom very sadly just,
'That man is Mr. Lincoln, Mama. He
Was made of marble; we are made of dust.'"

The Nation (Dublin), December 5, 1885.

'The titular poem in Mrs. Piatt's collection, "A Voyage to the Fortunate Isles," is an allegory whose lesson is, that in seeking for distant happiness we miss that which is within our grasp. The thought is an old one that has furnished food for meditation to the poet and philosopher since the earliest ages. Paradise itself was not free from these illusory ambitions. Love of change and desire of power and knowledge were what urged our first parents to their great transgression. It is no slight praise of Mrs. Piatt's poem, to say that, on a theme coeval with the world, and that in every generation has found its exponents among the greatest poets, our author has found a new and attractive figure by which to convey the old but ever necessary warning against restlessness and discontent. . . . In her description of children and their ways Mrs. Piatt could not be surpassed for accuracy and pathos. With intensified womanly fondness her whole heart goes out to them, as she watches their movements with the deep interest of her loving, sympathetic nature. . . . We would wish, did the limits of our space permit, to consider more at length these extraordinary and, with all their sadness, really beautiful poems, as they are well worthy of minute and careful study."

The Graphic, January 16, 1886.

'It is amply borne out by the present collected edition of her poems, the music and finish of which it is almost superfluous to praise. But, whilst acknowledging the author's great gifts, we cannot join in the chorus of unlimited praise which seems to be the rule in America. She has been compared to Mrs. Browning, and undoubtedly, the influence of the great English poet-woman is most apparent—one most powerful piece, "A Wall Between," is almost worthy of the author of "Bertha in the Lane." . . . The book is a striking one . . . and must not be neglected by any one who would form a just estimate of modern poetic art.'

The Scotsman, January 1, 1886.

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The Freeman's Journal, February 19, 1886.

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Published in the United States by HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & Co. Boston and New York, Price $1.00.

The Scotsman, December 26, 1884.

'There is a peculiar charm in the short poem entitled "In Clonmel Parish Churchyard," and another poem, "The Confession of My Neighbour," gives us one of those quick instinctive glimpses into a woman's heart which is apt to escape man's grosser vision.'

The Academy, March 21, 1885.

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The Graphic, July 11, 1885.

'Pathos distinguishes the best pieces, such as, "On the Pier at Queenstown," and "The Confession of My Neighbour," but there is a vein of quaint humour in places, as in a charming little childlike poem, "Comfort through a Window."'

The Saturday Review, July 11, 1885.

'Mrs. Piatt's slender volume risks overlooking by its mere slightness. It contains one poem, "The Gift of Tears," which for deep-hearted suggestiveness and concentrated pathos might have proceeded from Mrs. Browning. The kinship we claim for it is no light thing, and it is not lightly claimed.'

The Pilot (Boston, U.S.A.), April 18, 1885.

'Ought to endear her to every Irish Heart.'

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The Atlantic Monthly (Boston), April 1885.

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DAVID DOUGLAS, Publisher,
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The Saturday Review, May 15, 1886.

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The Athenæum, August 21, 1886.

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The Graphic, June 26, 1886.

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The Lady, June 17, 1886.

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The Glasgow Herald, July 5, 1886.

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The Liverpool Mercury, June 5, 1886.

'The volume must not be judged of by its size. It may be slender, but what it contains is far from being slight. Every stanza in the opening poem, from which the title of the book is taken, is quite a word-picture, while there is a peculiar freshness and sweetness about the whole. "An Irish Fairy Story," "A Portrait at Youghal," and "The Legend of Monkstown," are all equally admirable in their way; and there will be few readers, we imagine, who will not desire that each of them had been longer. There is not a poem in this book but is full of womanly instinct, and the quick, sharp insight of a woman's heart and eye. . . . Her present dainty little volume may well endear her to every warm-hearted native of Erin.'

The Freeman's Journal, June 18, 1886.

'Mrs. Piatt's little book, beautifully produced . . . adds one other to the many reasons already piled up for Ireland's love and gratitude to America and its people.

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., Publishers,
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CHILD'S WORLD BALLADS.

By Sarah M. B. Piatt.

Small Crown 8vo. Parchment, 3s. 6d. Embossed paper boards, 2s. 6d.

Published in the United States by ROBERT CLARK & CO.,
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The Scotsman (Edinburgh), July 11, 1887.

'Mrs. Piatt's claim to be considered one of the chief—if, indeed, not at the head—of American poetesses, has been generally acknowledged by the press of this country. She is at her best in poems dealing with child-life; though not necessarily in poems intended to be read by children. . . . The longest ballad in the collection, "Three Little Emigrants," is not unfamiliar. . . . It is a tale of three little children, who, resolving to seek their fortunes in the Far West, escaped from their nursery and wandered down to Cork Harbour, but, as one of the babies laments, the ship sailed without them. "Did the grey Admiral from Spain look westward with such longing eyes?" asks the author in concluding her narrative, with a touch of that highest form of humour which is nearly akin to sentiment. "The Child Mozart and St. John of Bohemia" is a lovely little ballad, describing how the boy musician was taken from his poverty-stricken home to play at the Court of Maria Theresa, and how he wanted to marry his new baby friend, Marie Antoinette. Mrs. Piatt's poems, as already intimated, are not intended to be read by young children; to older ones they appeal in many ways. Indeed, it may be said that the child who is too old to appreciate them is dead to poetry.'

The Dublin Evening Mail, July 13, 1887.

'Thus gracefully does Mrs. Piatt embroider her humble theme. *In tenui labor*, one may say of her, *at tenuis non gloria* to have written such lines. . . . Mrs. Piatt may have written these poems for children, but we should think poorly of the taste of the adult who did not appreciate their high poetic quality.'

The Nation (Dublin), July 16, 1887.

'There are just ten pieces in Mrs. Piatt's latest little volume, and if we were to quote all the exquisite poetry contained in it, we would quote the whole ten. That would be piracy, and yet if we were ever tempted to break for the benefit of our readers that literary commandment which says, "Thou shalt not steal," it is on the present occasion. The next best thing we can do for our friends is to advise them to go and procure the little book at once. The ten small poems are ten gems.'

The Cork Constitution, July 13, 1887.

'No one can fail to read them without being charmed by their beauty.'

The Irish Monthly, August 1887.

'It comes to us fittingly with a clustered group of little children's heads shining from the soft white covers. Once again the children have made the inspiration of this most delicate and whimsical muse, and once again the grown-up world may gladly stand still to listen. The book has all the quaintness and *naïveté* which one has learned to expect from Mrs. Piatt, and also the hint of tears in its laughter which is so great a charm in this writer's work. . . . Her tiny volume is very exquisitely produced, and, small as it is, may be trusted to win its way to high honour and into many hearts.'

The Liverpool Mercury, August 17, 1887.

'The ballads contained in it are few in number, but they are excellent in quality —as acceptably novel in subject as they are original in thought and fresh in tone.'

The Weekly Register (London), July 21, 1888.

'In the present volume the author has included few of those profounder meditations on childhood which will make her name memorable, but the lighter fancies here presented are delicate and personal, like all her beautiful work in verse.'

The Literary World, November 1887.

'Nothing could be more natural, for the author has an extraordinary insight into a child's way of expressing its thoughts. We cannot do better than to quote, without further comment, one of these charming little poems.'

The Pictorial World, August 1887.

'A little volume as choice in its contents as it is dainty in its exterior. . . . The contents . . . will become as thorough household words with children of a larger growth, as, say, "The Water-Babies," or Mrs. Ewing's "Jackanapes." Needs not at this date to enlarge upon Mrs. Piatt's poetical gifts, upon the wealth of melody distinguishing her verse, or on the humour and pathos which it embodies. But it may be frankly said that never has she written in a more sympathetic strain, or been seen to greater advantage than in this pretty, tiny book. What could be tenderer or more moving in its half-humorous pathos than that picture of the three babies who set out to look for their Atlantis, only to find at last that the ship had sailed without them? In this weary world one can hardly smile at such a story. How like an echo from Andersen is "The Watch of a Swan."'

The Graphic, September 10, 1887.

'A most delightful little volume of verse. . . . Apart from her poetic gifts, which as every one knows are great, Mrs. Piatt has the rare one of a delicate sense of humour; nothing could be better of its kind than the idea of the child at Holyrood; and the "Three Little Emigrants" is charming. If this lady did not write so well on graver themes, one could wish that she would always write for those of us who are children either in years or in heart. . . . The little volume is as dainty to look at as it is pleasant to read.'

ELLIOT STOCK, 62 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.